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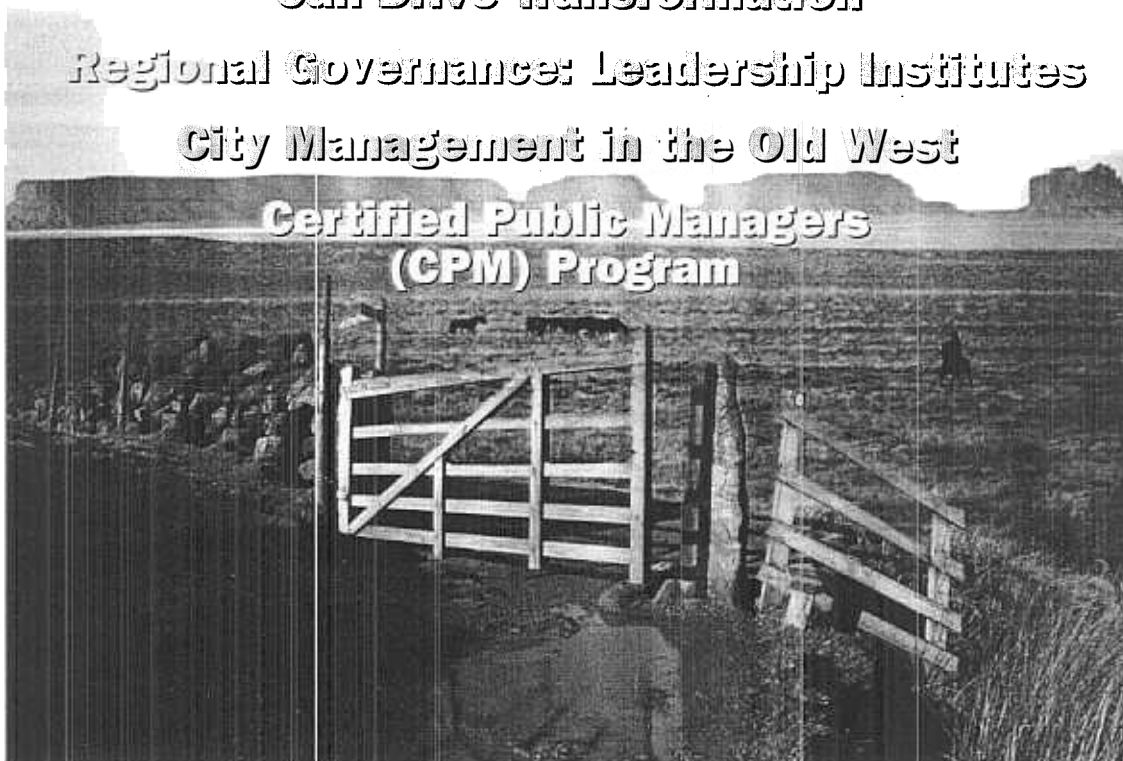
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It Takes a Community to Grow a Leader

The executive director of the Honolulu-Pacific Federal Executive Board spells out how the federal community helped make a Hawaii-wide program for senior federal managers unique and enduring.

L.A. BURKE

The Pacific Leadership Academy is one example of a federal community's solution for developing and steering today's leaders into the future. The partnership between the Honolulu-Pacific Federal Executive Board (FEB) and the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) Western Management Development Center (WMDC) is a winning combination that addresses the federal government's highly publicized human capital challenge. The collaborative FEB/OPM model focuses on creating great leaders for great government. Previous articles in *The Public Manager* described the general design and components of the senior and emerging leaders programs. This article addresses community involvement, current practices, and return-on-investment (ROI) outcomes.

Academy Roots

The Pacific Leadership Academy's design was based on a 2001 program developed specifically for the State of Hawaii by WMDC's program manager, Pamela Wilhelms. The state generously offered several senior federal managers an opportunity to participate in its program. Upon completion, these federal managers reported that the state's program was exactly what was needed to address the leadership needs of federal agencies in Hawaii. A partnership between OPM's Center and the FEB community created the inaugural offering of the Academy in December 2002. Today, in addition to the Senior Leaders track targeted to GS-12s to -15s or military equivalents, the academy offers a WDMC

program for Emerging Leaders, GS-9s to -12s. Word of mouth throughout the Pacific continues to generate an overabundance of applications for each program.

The response to the Pacific Leadership Academy has been heartening from multiple perspectives. The fellows, their respective organizations, and the program consultants have all provided positive feedback on the academy's design, implementation, and results. One graduate fellow stated, "The 'fires at work' cannot

L.A. Burke is the executive director of the Honolulu-Pacific Federal Executive Board and Pacific Leadership Academy administrator/dean of students. The FEB recognizes the contributions of Dr. Clare Carey for the development of the IAP consultant reference guidebook and for her leadership of the consultant cadre. Also, in an article on the academy in the Winter 2003-2004 issue of *The Public Manager*, the authors did not mention the role of Pamela Wilhelms, who created the senior leader track and refined it through a partnership between the Honolulu Pacific FEB and the WMDC. In fact, much of the refinement in the program has occurred in the past two years (and is not reflected in the previous article). If you would like more information on the Pacific Leadership Academy, please contact L.A. Burke at laburke@hpfeb.org or Pamela Wilhelms, associate director, Western Management Development Center, and director of the Pacific Leadership Academy, at pswilhel@opm.gov.

extinguish this 'new flame' because it burns on the inside. I truly believe I have walked away (from the academy) with tools to become an 'enlightened' leader. It's time to practice in a new way now."

Numerous organizations have cited the merits of participating in the Academy programs:

- "The detachment is already reaping benefits on the dollars spent (for) the Emerging Leaders Course."
- "Attending this senior leaders course has greatly enhanced (the fellow's) leadership. I know we will continue to harvest the benefits."
- "The process of the senior leaders course has provided and developed skills that enable (the fellow) to work issues through analysis, mentoring, counseling, discussions and training. Our fellow has learned better ways of doing business with methods, processes and resources."

Continually, the consultants express their commitment to the academy and willingness to volunteer. In addition to the intrinsic rewards received from contributing to their fellow's professional development, the consultants acknowledge the valuable learning gained from the experience. One consultant offers, "As a consultant, I am challenged to a new level of thinking myself."

Community Based Leadership— Individual Action Plans and Consultants

For many successful leadership programs, the accolades are plentiful at the conclusion of a program. What makes the Pacific Leadership Academy program different and long lasting is the participation and involvement by the extended federal community. Representatives from the Department of Defense (DoD), all the military services, law enforcement, and a range of civilian agencies are united in their efforts to cultivate and reinforce the fellows' learning during the program and long after graduation. The academy is designed as a competency-based, hands-on developmental learning laboratory. Dynamic training sessions are combined with the essential component of the application of the identified leadership competencies. Individual action plans (IAPs) provide an opportunity for fellows to practice and stretch their skills within fail-safe parameters as they apply the competencies to their own organization and work environments.

Seasoned leaders and academy alumni have volunteered to serve as consultants to assist the fellows with

their IAPs. The consultant-fellow relationship is a unique and special one, which is determined per grade, experience, and organization. To facilitate confidentiality, consultants must serve in different government organizations from their assigned fellows. Unencumbered by positional or organizational authority, the consultants and fellows are free to develop a candid, constructive, and personal relationship. This unbiased and "chain-of-command-free" reporting relationship encourages fellows to experiment with new strategies and skills without fear of failure or organizational politics.

The consultants guide their fellows throughout the entire year of academy requirements. During the IAP planning phase, consultants help their fellows define a reasonable scope for their projects, focus on measurable outcomes, and demonstrate an ROI. The consultant's role is to inspire the fellow to share learning and experience, to help link IAP objectives to organizational objectives, and to encourage the fellow to try new skills and strategies. The consultants serve as neutral supporters, provide "sanity" checks, motivate, and hold the fellow accountable.

Research Paper

At the conclusion of the program, in addition to the IAPs, fellows are required to write an eight- to ten-page research paper that reflects their experience in the academy, integrates the mastery of their program's competencies, and demonstrates their commitment to current and future leadership roles. For the consultant and fellow, this is the capstone of the program.

After the initial angst of completing these requirements, the fellows consistently respond that the IAP process, consultant feedback and accountability, coaching, and research papers are the most valuable tools and experience they have been given. When was the last time you heard a student thank you for making them do assignments? In addition, as part of the academy's succession strategy, graduates of the programs are invited to serve as consultants for the next classes. This academy experience reinforces key concepts and ensures continuous learning.

The best way to learn a new skill or concept is to teach others. Over the last three years, 60 senior managers and academy alumni in the community have steered 117 graduates through their own leadership journeys. Currently, 86 fellows are enrolled in the FY05

Senior Leaders and Emerging Leaders programs with 44 alumni consultants. Commitment to the program runs strong on myriad levels. Senior executives, high-level managers, and academy alumni (even those who have transferred to new jobs throughout the Pacific theater and mainland) continue to offer their personal time and talents to serve in the consultant role.

The "So What" Factor

What benefits have the fellows, consultants, and their agencies received from the academy experience? The first thing the fellows describe is the valuable network of peers in the classroom. One fellow commented, "As everyone reflected during our last few hours in class, I came to realize that in fact, we had 38 other instructors in our class... all of us!" In one instance, a fellow received a new job opportunity because of meeting a peer whose agency was hiring. The program's self-assessment process revealed to another fellow that she was not using her talents in her current position. Applying the findings from the assessment, she transferred to an entirely different line of work. Now in her new role, she is successful and productive. With newfound confidence, several fellows have dared to accept new leadership roles in their agencies and community. One fellow's IAP solved a long-term security issue for the Customs and Border Protection Agency in Hawaii. Not only did this IAP dramatically improve security at the Honolulu International Airport, but the fellow also received a prestigious national award for his work. Ten percent of our graduates have been promoted since completing the program. They report that their participation in the academy was a significant contributor and impetus for their promotion. Tangible and intangible results continue to mount. "Perhaps one of the best side benefits of attending the Academy is a renewed, refreshed and positive attitude on the best government in the world... ours."

Unlike most government training programs, the Pacific Leadership Academy requires participants and their respective agencies to invest thought, ongoing energy, and ROI application of the designated program competencies. The academy's high standards and 100 percent participation expectations for the fellows are strictly enforced. Graduation requirements include full attendance, responsive interaction, and completion of all assignments. Selection for the consultant pool requires proven leadership performance and demonstration of selfless service for the benefit of others. The collaboration and commitment of diverse agencies, fellows, and consultants within the feder-

al community on-island contributes to the uniqueness and success of the Pacific Leadership Academy. The pending leadership vacuum in our federal government has been well documented. The Pacific Leadership Academy is a positive community-based response to the federal need for enlightened leaders. In the words of one alumnus, "Thanks for another great week of learning. Everything is tying together, and I feel like I am growing before my eyes. My hat is off...for putting this program together and renewing my faith in government as a place to grow, thrive and give back."

Indeed, it takes a community to grow a leader. The Pacific Leadership Academy with its supportive federal network serves as a model for the development of our future leaders. ■

BETTER TREATMENT

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Proof of Concept

In December 2000, a federal judge in South Dakota gave the state Department of Corrections a year to eliminate the use of restraints as punishment, restrain the use of isolation, and boost education and mental health services for young detainees. Within a year, the agency had done what the judge required and gave the court the PbS data that proved it. The judge pronounced the state in substantial compliance. In January 2003, an executive order from South Dakota's governor recognized PbS as "an effective and efficient process of program evaluation designed to improve conditions of confinement." He ordered the corrections agency to continue its participation in PbS in all state juvenile facilities and report results to the state legislature at least once a year.

No public manager could ask for more. ■

REFERENCE

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